

VZCZCXYZ0006
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBU #0154/01 0411351
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 101350Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0498
INFO MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 000154

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [HA](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: Firm Offer of 200 Additional Peacekeepers for Haiti

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador met February 5 and February 8 with Defense Minister Nilda Garre and Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana, respectively, to confirm Argentina's offer of additional peacekeepers to Haiti. Both confirmed that the formal offer to the UN had been made. Garre said the offer was for a mixed group of soldiers and marines; her Vice Minister, Alfredo Forti, thought that the UN would accept 150 to 175 troops. Taiana shared a concern that previous development assistance to Haiti had not been well-designed to strengthen government institutions and urged that we coordinate reconstruction efforts with this goal in mind. Taiana's office issued a press release (which was transmitted in its entirety by State news agency TELAM) following the meeting emphasizing that he had urged the United States to coordinate assistance through the United Nations. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador, accompanied by Defense Attache and Military Group Commander, met February 5 with Minister of Defense Nilda Garre to confirm that an offer of additional peacekeeping troops for Haiti had been made by the Government of Argentina to the UN. Garre said the GOA had formally offered 200, a mix of army and marines. Vice Minister Alfredo Forti said that initial feedback was that the UN would accept 150 to 175 only due to an excess of volunteers. The troops will fly charter aircraft to Haiti and be supplied by the Argentine vessel San Blas. Argentina's peacekeepers already in Haiti will undergo a rotation in the first half of May.

¶3. (SBU) Garre emphasized the urgency of a pending GOA request for a Foreign Military Sales (FMS) purchase of water-drilling equipment to support a joint Argentine-Peruvian Engineering battalion. She described this as very important to Argentina.

Foreign Minister Urges Reorientation of Development Aid

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador, DCM and Pol-Mil Officer met Monday February 8 with Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana, who confirmed that the formal offer of additional peacekeepers had been made. Argentina was awaiting confirmation that they had been accepted, he said.

¶5. (SBU) Minister Taiana urged that the United States and the international donor community "recognize and support Haitian government authorities" in providing reconstruction aid to the

country. He said that international assistance over many years leading up to the earthquake had not been designed to support the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of Haitian citizens. He pointed to European donor assistance as one example, as it was chiefly distributed through non-governmental organizations. "Perhaps this terrible disaster can help us become more effective in reconstructing and supporting the government through our assistance," he said. Taiana also urged that more assistance be coordinated through the umbrella of the United Nations, something he believed had been done successfully in post-conflict El Salvador.

¶6. (SBU) Taiana described these as challenges to be taken up at the next international ministerial on Haiti in March. Asked by the Ambassador who would attend for Argentina, he said it would at least be at the level of his Vice Minister (Victorio Taccetti) and that perhaps he would attend.

¶7. (SBU) Both Taiana and Defense Minister Garre described Argentina's agricultural extension project "Pro-Huerta" as a significant local development success in Haiti. The project replicates work done previously in Argentina to build subsistence and truck farming capacity and to meet the country's needs for fresh foods. Garre, who visited the Argentine contingent in Haiti in September 2007, said that assistance had been provided to 60,000 different gardens.

¶8. (SBU) Although she did not address the specific theme of building government institutions, Garre presented a somewhat more positive view of international development work in Haiti prior to the earthquake. She said that the country had shown marked improvement in sanitation, public order, and economic development over the course of her visits between 2006 and 2009. Garre described public security as among the biggest needs, saying that she had estimated the country needed between 1000 and 1200 additional police and prison security personnel before the earthquake.

Foreign Ministry Press Release Urges UN Role

¶9. (SBU) Soon after issuance of our positively-toned press release on the meeting between Foreign Minister Taiana and the Ambassador (which was cleared with the Ministry), the Ministry issued its own release without coordination. The GOA release emphasized that Taiana had urged upon Ambassador the importance of letting the Haitian Government design its own reconstruction and development plan and the importance of coordinating U.S. assistance through the United Nations. The Ministry's release -- transmitted in its entirety by State news agency TELAM -- was picked up as an admonition to the USG in most major daily papers. Taiana departed later on the February 8 for the UNASUR meeting in Ecuador on the topic of assistance to Haiti.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: Many GOA officials have approved of the massive U.S. assistance to Haiti and have steered clear of regional conspiracy theories about USG intentions. The GOA has also not been shy about asking for assistance from the USG, especially the U.S. military, to support its efforts in Haiti. That said, Argentina's political leadership has chosen to perceive excessive unilateralism in the U.S. response, probably to maintain a posture of independence from the USG, and will likely support a regional request that U.S. assistance be coordinated through the UN. End Comment.
MARTINEZ